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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

SECRET

VZCZCMJA611JIA364
OO RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 28978 1781215
ZNY SSSSS
O P 271138Z JUN 67 ZFF4
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
RUHHHQA/CINCPAC
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
STATE GRNC
BT
S E C R E T SAIGON 28978

022605

1967 JUN 27 AM 8 28

EXCISE

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A) SAIGON 28877, B) SAIGON 27813

1. WE HAVE INFORMATION RECEIVED BY TELEPHONE FROM BANGKOK THAT BIG MINH HAS HELD PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE SAID THAT HE WANTS TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT BUT HAS BEEN PREVENTED FROM FILING BY THE REFUSAL OF THE GVN AMBASSADOR TO GIVE

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HIM A VISA. BIG MINH REPORTEDLY SAID HE HAS CABLED THIEU, KY, AND ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN SUU REQUESTING PERMISSION TO RETURN HOME TO RUN IN THE ELECTION. HE CLAIMED THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL NOT BE FREE IF HE IS NOT ALLOWED TO RUN AND SAID THE REASON HE HAS NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO RETURN IS THAT HE IS TOO POPULAR. THE GVN AMBASSADOR IN BANGKOK IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE ISSUE OF BIG MINH'S VISA DEPENDS ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM SAIGON.

2. ASSUME THAT BANGKOK WILL REPORT ANY FURTHER DETAILS. IF QUERIED BY PRESS, WE PLAN TO RESPOND (AS INDICATED REFERENCE B) THAT THIS IS AN INTERNAL VIETNAMESE MATTER AND ANY COMMENT MUST COME FROM THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES.

3. ACCORDING TO [redacted] SOME OF THE GENERALS HELD A MEETING JUNE 27 TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF BIG MINH'S RETURN. [redacted] SAID THAT THE GENERAL PRESENT, INCLUDING BOTH THIEU AND KY, OPPOSED HIS RETURN AND THEY HAVE SENT TWO GENERALS (LINH QUANG VIEN -

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE 10/7/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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MINISTER OF SECURITY AND NGUYEN VAN LE - INSPECTOR GENERAL ARMED FORCES) TO BANGKOK TO DISSUADE BIG MINH FROM ATTEMPTING TO RETURN. ADDED THAT HE HIMSELF STRONGLY OPPOSES THIS DECISION BECAUSE IT VIOLATES THE CONSTITUTION.

4. COMMENT: (A) AS WE INDICATED IN REFERENCE B, WE DO NOT THINK THAT BIG MINH'S RETURN WOULD BE DESIRABLE AT THIS TIME. SOME IN THE MILITARY MIGHT SEE HIM AS THE LEADER WHO CAN STAND ABOVE BOTH THIEU AND KY AND THUS REUNITE THE MILITARY. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, HOWEVER, WE DO NOT THINK THAT EITHER THIEU OR KY WILL GIVE UP THEIR AMBITIONS OR ALLOW THEIR FOLLOWERS TO OPT FOR A BIG MINH SOLUTION EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED FOR TACTICAL REASONS TO PERMIT HIS REUTRN. WE THEREFORE CONTINUE TO SEE IN THE RETURN OF BIG MINH THE PROSPECT OF EVEN GREATER DIVISIONS AND CONFUSION AMONG THE MILITARY.

(B) ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS FAIRLY UNLIKELY, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GENERAL THIEU MAY ULTIMATELY SEEK TO CAPITALIZE ON BIG MINH'S PUBLIC REQUEST TO RETURN TO VIET NAM. THIEU MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT ONE WAY TO SLOW DOWN THE KY BANDWAGON WOULD BE TO BLAME KY FOR BLOCKING BIG MINH'S RETURN. HE COULD DO THIS BY ANNOUNCING PUBLICLY THAT HE FAVORS AND INTENDS TO PERMIT THE RETURN OF BIG MINH. ONE OR MORE OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES MIGHT ALSO PRESS PUBLICLY FOR BIG MINH'S RETURN IN THE HOPE THAT A THIRD MILITARY CANDIDATE WOULD FURTHER IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES. SUCH MOVES WOULD PUT GREAT PRESSURE ON KY TO AGREE.

(C) AT THIS POINT IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WE CAN DO TO AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THIS AFFAIR. IF ANY MAJOR CANDIDATE OR SUBSTANTIAL BODY OF OPINION SHOULD CLEARLY FAVOR BIG MINH'S RETURN, IT WOULD BE VERY RISKY FOR US TO TRY TO BLOCK IT. WE HOPE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE ATTITUDES OF SOME OF THE MAJOR CANDIDATES BY TOMORROW, AND WE MAY THEN BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO RECOMMEND SOME ACTION.

BUNKER

ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O 6/27/67, 8:30 A.M.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE 6/27/67, 8:53 A.M.

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